

1855 Letter: Health Problems Serious; Spirits Remain High

12 years after their 1843 marriage, Francis S. Dunham (1812-1856)(8)(John 1, John 2, John 3, Ebenezer 4, Ebenezer 5, Jonathan 6, Ralph 7) & Leah Ann Handy had 4 children: Frank (b. 1844); Sammy (b. 1850); Ralph (b. 1852); & Cornelia/Neelie (b. 1854). Otherwise, things were not going well for the couple. Francis' health had broken down, & he had had to give up his boys' school in Berlin, MD. At this point he was staying in his native Connecticut, evidently in the home of his brother, although he doesn't, in this letter, specify which one. The reason for this prolonged stay in the north, away from wife & children, isn't clear. Was it because of the recent death of his mother? Or possibly it was to seek the advice of northern doctors...

"Rockville, Conn. Tues. ((Date of Aug. 21, 1855 established via misc. clues & a perpetual calendar)). My dear Anna: I do not recollect the day of the month, so I substitute the day of the week to save the trouble of inquiry. When I first got up this morning I kept about rather too long without my breakfast. In consequence began to be faint, but after a glass of hot toddy & my breakfast, I began to feel right again. They say I do not cough half as much as I did last year, that my countenance looks better, only that I am a little thinner. I inadvertently spoke out loud this morning. My brother & myself were dozing after daylight when the bell for getting up began to ring. 'Do you hear that?' says I. 'It says "Fellow, get up!"' I was immediately aware that I had spoken aloud, & asked my brother how my voice sounded. He said that it was perfectly natural. He was not fully awake, & I am not sure that he could judge correctly the affect. To myself, however, it seemed natural, & I was not conscious of making the least effort. I have not repeated the experiment, nor do I judge it expedient, as it might do injury even though it should prove that the voice is partially restored.

"Sister Cornelia ((Cornelia Dunham Loomis (1816-1889), wife of Lucius Loomis)) came here yesterday. Dear girl, how scared she was when she found I could not talk. She had not heard of it. She was accustomed to all of the symptoms of pulmonary disease--coughing, spitting blood, etc. She did not mind them at all. Scores of people exhibited them again & again & are living & comfortable yet. But to lose your voice, that was new, unheard of, terrible! At length I explained to her that I could speak, but forbore as a matter of caution by order of the physician, which seemed to satisfy her.

"I expect to go to Coventry tomorrow. You were best direct your next to that place. Sister is very anxious that I should see Dr. Dymock. She has very great faith in his resources. From her description of his treatment, I am convinced that he will agree exactly with Dr. Pitts. I shall see him, however, if I can make it convenient.

"Sister Mary ((1829-1879) UNM)) is at a watering place on the sound. Cornelia has just returned from the same place. She says Brother Lucius ((Loomis)) is anxious to go, & I am not sure but he & I will take a trip together. I am well convinced that cheerful company, amusement, anything that take me out of myself, is the best medicine for me. If I can get with Brother Lucius & some of the originals who assemble at an obscure watering place--obscure, I mean, in comparison with Newport & Cape May, but grand enough & fashionable enough for the small shopkeepers in provincial cities & farmers in more remote towns--I should certainly find something to laugh at, & I really believe if I could laugh heartily & thoroughly from 3 to 6 times per day, I might cure consumptive bone chill or anything else. I wonder if our celebrated heads have never insisted more strongly on this. It is true that they recognize it fully & mention it frequently in their misanthropies (??), but this is not sufficient; they should apply the remedy specifically. Let them study the moral & intellectual peculiarities of the patient. & classify the ancient (to Page 2)

1855 LETTER (From P. 1) & modern wits & humorists accordingly. Horace & Irvanas, Fielding, Rabelais, Lever & Dickens, etc. Instead of pills & powders measured by the pound, let us have 'Don Quixote twice a day, 1 ½ hrs. each.'-- 'The Braying Adventures of Charles O'Malley'-- 'Handy Andy'--etc. For some cases & on many occasions living specimens would answer a better purpose than books: a boy who can crow like a chicken would answer a very good purpose sometimes. It requires a great variety however; what would move paroxysms of laughter in one case would not draw a faint smile in another. I myself am a capital illustration of this fact. I can scarcely even laugh at what excites the risibles of other people. The smart sayings of pert children which set the table in a roar, excite in me simply the desire of switching the urchin, or rather the parent, who certainly deserves it more.

"But I commend this whole subject to you & Dr. Pitts, & in the meantime I will resume this tomorrow morn if not before. By the way, I have not got any letter yet & am not sure I should look for one. I suppose however you will write by Sunday, in which case I should receive it tomorrow. I shall have to make some provision to have it sent after me, as the mail does not come in til night, & I shall then be in Coventry.

"I have just eaten my supper, & it does not set very well., in consequence, I believe, of my having drunk a glass of the famous Stafford wine. I had heard it so much vaunted that I procured a pint & thought I should have a rare treat, having become rather tired of my Old Monongahela. Well, what do you think it tasted like? Very nearly like molasses water & vinegar. I think I shall go into the imported article again tomorrow.

"We have had some quite cool evenings here, so as to have a fire in the sitting room. You need not be afraid; I keep strictly within doors & begin to make all snug & warm before sunset, with carefully closed doors & windows before I sit down to write. Have just had to do it all over again. The little are sure to pass through & leave them all open once in about 5 minutes, & as I cannot scream at them, I have no other recourse but to throw a book after them or get up & shut the door myself. I feel better this evening than I did this morning. Have eaten a hearty dinner, moderate breakfast & supper.

"Melinda ((Melinda Hyde, daughter of his sister Sarah. Melinda (b. 1840) later married Rev. George Russell Warner)) is here attending the high school. She reminds me much of my sister Maria, is exceedingly anxious to be remembered to her Aunt Anna & all the children, wants to know about the baby ((Cornelia)). She has charged me over & over to send you love & kisses.

"This is Weds. morn I have just finished my breakfast, eaten rather too heartily, perhaps. Begin to be very anxious to hear from you. I suppose you wrote on Sun., so that there will certainly be a letter for me tonight, but I am afraid I shall not get it. I could not go to Coventry today; the chances of getting there are not frequent, & I am anxious to see old Dr. Dymock. It is nearly 7 o'clock, & I judge you have just got up. Hope you slept well last night. You must have got accustomed to my absence by this time so as not to be alarmed at every noise. I advise, if you have not already done so, that you buy a bushel of wheat of Mr. Henry & get him to carry it to the mill when he goes with his own. Flour is still very dear, & there is almost a certainty that it will go up about half in the course of 2 months. Dearest, I hope you will take the most excellent care of yourself, & I commend you to the keeping of God, our heavenly father.

"Always yours, F. S. DUNHAM."



LEFT: Thanks to Leon Wood, Findlay, Ohio, DD has this nice portrait from the 1923 wedding of his parents, Alma Stevens & Roy A. Wood (1889-1969) (9)(John 1, Samuel 2, Samuel 3, Ebenezer 4, Samuel 5, Lewis 6, Susannah Dunham Perry 7, Hannah Perry Wood 8). The event took place in Roxbury, MA.

More SW Michigan Puzzles

Compounding the mysteries surrounding Dunham pioneers in Southwest Michigan is this excerpt from *The Portrait & Biographical Record of Berrien & Cass Counties* (1893), which was received from Betty J. Dunham, Kalkaska, MI. As with other families settling in this area, we've never been able to connect these individuals to the larger family picture.

JAMES R. DUNHAM. The cultivation of small fruits has proven to be one of the most important and successful industries of Berrien County, and among the men who are prosperously engaged in this business may be mentioned the name of our subject, who owns a fine fruit farm located on section 31, St. Joseph Township. Here he has thirty-six acres, upon which he raises peaches, grapes and berries, making his shipments to the markets at Chicago and Milwaukee. In addition to this valuable property, he is the owner of six hundred and sixty-one acres of land in Lincoln Township, of which seventy-five have been cleared and placed under

excellent cultivation. Upon that place he raises small fruits and berries, and finds this business a remunerative one. His wife is the owner of thirty-four acres in Lincoln Township, which is partly cleared and devoted to fruit-raising.

A native of Michigan, our subject was born in Portage Township, Kalamazoo County, on the 21st of April, 1836. He traces his ancestry to patriotic and valiant forefathers. His paternal great-grandfather, Matthew Dunham, enlisted at the commencement of the Revolutionary War and served until its close, and tradition says that he was present at the famous "tea party" in Boston Harbor. He settled on Johnson Creek, in New York State, where he constructed and managed a raft in the

America in service during the War of 1812. But the raft being discovered by the British fleet, he was forced

The paternal grandfather of our subject was James Dunham, who was reared in New Jersey and married a Miss Ward, of New York City, whence they moved to western New York and from there up Sackett's Harbor, and later to Canada. The father of our subject, Timothy Ward Dunham, was born in Canada, January 12, 1808, and was a prominent farmer in Orleans County, N. Y. His father died when he was a child of two years, and eight years later his mother was again married. He was about seventeen when he started out in the world to earn his own livelihood, and, proceeding to New York City, he found employment for a time on a farm.

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BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN HISTORY (cont'd from Page 3)

In early days Timothy Dunham was a Whig, and later became a strong Abolitionist. He is now identified with the Republican party, to which he gives his unwavering support. He was converted in 1828, uniting with the Methodist Episcopal Church, and is now a member of the Methodist Protestant Church. He is one of the oldest surviving settlers of St. Joseph Township, and at the present time (1893) is eighty-five years of age. A man of affable manners, intelligence of a very high order, and shrewd business qualities, he has attracted a host of friends and attained a position among the most successful of Berrien's pioneers.

The subject of this sketch was reared in Kalamazoo County, Mich., until 1854, when he accompanied his father to Cass County, this State. At the age of eighteen he came to Berrien County, and about six months after he attained his majority he settled on his present farm. Prior to his settlement here, the timber had been cut down, but had been replaced by a dense growth of brush, which forced Mr. Dunham to do considerable "grubbing." As the result of energy and industry, he succeeded in clearing the land, planting trees and improving the place. At the time he came here, the entire country was in a very wild state. Wild animals were here in abundance, and our subject frequently engaged in the sport of hunting deer, which often fell the victims of his unerring shot.

In Kalamazoo County, June 25, 1859, Mr. Dun-

ham married Miss Rebecca Ann, daughter of Charles Ackley, and they are the parents of six children, namely: Enos W., a prominent fruit-grower of Lincoln Township; Sarah Ella, a school teacher residing at home; Ernest J., who resides at Stevensville, Berrien County, and operates a sawmill which he and his father own; Catherine E., Charles W. and Mary A., who are at home.

ANNOUNCEMENT

DD still needs materials for publication--both photographs & printed or handwritten text. Photocopies will usually suffice. Remember, pictures need not be old ones, & if you are lucky enough to have pictures of grandchildren, please share them with DD. Surnames need not be Dunham, as long as the bloodline is in place.

At this point DD can afford to grow a little, so if you know of people who would like to receive it AND who would be willing & able to share materials, give them a holler.

PSK

Coming to Michigan in 1834, the senior Mr. Dunham spent one summer in Jackson County and in the spring of the following year settled in Kalamazoo County, where he purchased land and embarked in the nursery business. In 1854 he disposed of his property in Kalamazoo County, and, coming to Berrien County, located in St. Joseph Township, where he purchased land and engaged in fruit-raising. Having been reared along the lake shore in New York State, in the midst of a fine fruit country, he was naturally familiar with, and interested in, the cultivation of fruit, and when he settled in Kalamazoo County he endeavored, but in vain, to make a success of that business.

When Mr. Dunham came to St. Joseph Township, he purchased two hundred acres along the lake shore, and judging that this land would be especially adapted for fruit-raising, he embarked in that business, and proved, to the great astonishment and delight of other people in the county, that the soil here is peculiarly fitted for the raising of fruits. His name is worthy of perpetuation, for he was the pioneer of the nursery business in Kalamazoo County and one of the pioneers of the fruit business here, as well as one of the most extensive fruit-growers in this section of the State.

Removing to Lincoln Township, Mr. Dunham embarked in the sawmill business and was thus engaged for a number of years. He also planted a peach and a grape orchard on his place, where he resided until the fall of 1892, and since that time has made his home with our subject. He was married June 28, 1835, to Miss Catherine, a daughter of Enos Newman. This estimable lady was born in Vermont, whence in an early day she accompanied her parents to Covington, N. Y., and there grew to womanhood. At the age of twenty-four she came to Kalamazoo, Mich., where she was married. Her death occurred July 12, 1892, at the age of eighty-two years and eleven months. She was a woman of many noble attributes of character and was devotedly attached to her husband and children. Two of her children were Mary, who married Bryce Quint, and died on a farm near Niles; and Martha, who died when six months old.

Dunham Births in New York
compiled by William G. Burke

	year	name	date	location	County	Cer. No.
474	1921	William C.	1/2	Fulton	Oswego	6290
475	1891		6/22	Granby	Oswego	24477
476	1917	Nora M.	11/10	Hannibal	Oswego	108629
477	1883	M	6/24	Oswego	Oswego	12939
478	1888	F	5/2	Oswego	Oswego	15733
479	1903	F	6/17	Parish	Oswego	22386
480	1912	F	6/7	West Monroe	Oswego	37567
481	1914	F	7/10	West Monroe	Oswego	54357
482	1914	Christine E.	4/25	West Monroe	Oswego	29717
483	1916	Milton L.	7/23	West Monroe	Oswego	60425
484	1919	Milton S.	5/31	West Monroe	Oswego	38698
485	1886	Orren L.	4/29	Cooperstown	Otsego	13403
486	1896	Walter H.	1/1	Oneonta	Otsego	30
487	1901	Katherine M.	11/9	Oneonta	Otsego	42570
488	1903	Lillian B.	1/27	Apalachin	Owego	3398
489	1887	Mary E.	12/23	Jamaica	Queens	42911
490	1890	Helen I.	9/11	Jamaica	Queens	33845
491	1909	F	6/10	Roxbury	Queens	26441
492	1904	M	9/30	Berlin	Rensselaer	39896
493	1914	M	9/27	Branswick	Rensselaer	72165
494	1888	F	11/1	Brunswick	Rensselaer	39490
495	1888	Alfred M.	8/17	Brunswick	Rensselaer	29697
496	1894	Charles B.	5/3	Brunswick	Rensselaer	17295
497	1903	F	9/12	Brunswick	Rensselaer	38366
498	1905	F	5/28	Brunswick	Rensselaer	22854
499	1906	Catherine E.	4/15	Brunswick	Rensselaer	58176
500	1908	John D.	6/26	Brunswick	Rensselaer	58082
501	1908	Julia M.	5/27	Brunswick	Rensselaer	24284
502	1910	Josephine	10/4	Brunswick	Rensselaer	71201
503	1913	F	8/6	Brunswick	Rensselaer	49422
504	1913	George A.	8/11	Brunswick	Rensselaer	49410
505	1915	F	6/22	Brunswick	Rensselaer	50736
506	1916	Harriet A.	5/18	Brunswick	Rensselaer	42875
507	1917	F	2/14	Brunswick	Rensselaer	15675
508	1918	Howard E.	3/20	Brunswick	Rensselaer	?
509	1919	Ella M.	5/7	Brunswick	Rensselaer	38919
510	1920	Donald L.	8/2	Brunswick	Rensselaer	70637
511	1921	Georgianna	10/1	Brunswick	Rensselaer	?
512	1885	F	3/24	Castleton	Rensselaer	8496
513	1895	Hattie E.	12/25	E. Poestenkill	Rensselaer	53972
514	1903	M	8/20	Grafton	Rensselaer	32082
515	1907	Ethel F.	7/6	Grafton	Rensselaer	30507
516	1908	F	8/7	Grafton	Rensselaer	36148

TO BE CONTINUED